

**HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY**

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**SPECIAL EVENTS ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES**

April 9, 2009

PRESENT: Councillor Brad Johns, Chair  
Mr. Douglas MacDonald, Vice-Chair  
Councillor Dawn Sloane  
Ms. Sally Camus, Cultural Advisory Committee  
Mr. Brian Rose, Halifax Chamber of Commerce  
Mr. Stuart Jolliffe, Destination Halifax  
Mr. Joe Gillivan, Hotel Association of Nova Scotia

REGRETS: Councillor Lorelei Nicoll  
Mr. Bill Mont, Citizen Representative  
Mr. Brad Smith, Greater Halifax Partnership

STAFF Mr. Andrew Whittemore, Manager, Community Development  
Mr. Mike Gillett, Coordinator, Civic Events & Festivals  
Mr. Andrew Cox, Civic Events Coordinator  
Mr. Billy Comer, Civic Events Coordinator  
Mr. Grant MacDonald, Events Halifax  
Ms. Chris Newson, Legislative Assistant

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**1. CALL TO ORDER**

The Chair called the meeting to order, without quorum present, at 1:12 p.m. in the Media Room, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor City Hall, 1841 Argyle Street, Halifax.

**2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES - None**

**3. APPROVAL OF ORDER OF BUSINESS AND APPROVAL OF ADDITIONS AND DELETIONS**

- Additions:**
- 5.1 Hallmark Events
    - 5.1.1 Halifax Pride - Councillor Sloane
    - 5.1.2 International Air Show - Mr. Doug MacDonald
  - 5.2 Commons Concert Sites
  - 5.3 Membership - Greater Halifax Partnership Representation

The Committee approved the agenda as amended.

**4. EVENTS HALIFAX STRATEGY**

- A Confidential document, dated January 29, 2009, prepared by BoardWorks Consulting Inc. was before the Committee.
- A copy of the PowerPoint presentation was circulated to the Committee at this time.

Mr. Grant MacDonald, Events Halifax, presented. Mr. Andrew Whittemore, HRM Manager, Community Development, Mr. Jim Donovan, HRM Manager, Economic Development, and Mr. Scott Ferguson, Interim President and CEO, Halifax Metro Centre/Trade Centre Limited, were also in attendance to respond to questions of the Committee. Mr. Whittemore requested that an Information Report containing the completed report by Cameron Hawkins & Associates, Consultant, distributed to the Committee in late 2008 be re-circulated as reference material.

Mr. MacDonald explained that the life cycle of Events Halifax, in its current form, was nearing its end due to funding realities. The proposal currently before the Committee was for a Major Events Partnership comprised of the Trade Centre Limited (TCL), Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM), the Province of Nova Scotia and the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA) (Government of Canada); the partnership would share in the knowledge capital of TCL associated with major events. The result would be a dedicated and sustained partnership with all levels of government combined with a more

strategic approach to the acquisition of major events and a greater alignment of priorities.

Councillor Sloane entered the meeting at 1:22 p.m.

The following comments are highlights of Mr. MacDonald's presentation:

- Major Events may be defined by the following criteria: they raise the profile of the host market; are a catalyst for business development; enhance quality of life for residents; advance corporate priorities; provide ancillary tourism opportunities; help with job creation; provide government revenue; promote achievement in business, arts, cultural, sport and heritage; attracts media coverage; attracts participation/involvement from a wide area; has a measurable impact on the brand and reputation of the host community.
- Major Events: generate economic (and other impacts) greater than the initial expenditure; require significant use of infrastructure and provide lasting legacies.
- A desire to see HRM strengthen its position in the major event market led to the hiring of Cameron Hawkins & Associates, Consultants, who prepared a report resulting in recommendations for a new governance, leadership and funding model and that all three levels of government be actively engaged with other key partners so that HRM may realize its potential as a major events city.
- The Cameron Hawkins & Associates report suggested a more strategic approach with sustainable cost management and alignment of objectives and resources with senior levels of government.
- The benefit to HRM for participating in the proposed structure would include dedicated resources focussed on acquisition, promotion and execution of major events as well as a governance structure that would allow all partners to be represented in decision making.
- The objectives of the proposed strategy would be to generate new leads and develop new major event business; to increase capacity of all participating markets in Nova Scotia; to develop an objective means of evaluating major events and their respective impact and returns; to establish a collaboration model that would include all levels of government and engage a network of local and regional organizations interested in the development of the major events sector; empower communities (rural and urban) to be better positioned in event development and acquisition; a platform for the promotion of the Nova Scotia brand nationally and internationally; and would reduce duplication within the sector.
- A more coordinated approach to researching, evaluating, bidding, funding and hosting major events would provide a competitive advantage to HRM and the province in attracting major events.
- The governance model proposed would be the establishment of a Major Events

Partnership Advisory Board that would allow for significant engagement by the Major Events Partnership's sponsors without imposing additional fiduciary and legal duties upon the designates. TCL would act as the Service Provider. Specific accountability mechanisms would also be implemented. The Board would provide strategic direction to the Service Provider (possibly TCL).

- Financing options and proposed Human Resourcing network were also reviewed.
- An analysis of the current process showed the following concerns/issues: a lack of cooperation and common vision among the stakeholders; inconsistent funding; red tape; inconsistent audiences/ticket sales; an aging volunteer base; demand for public access to venues during events and the public's perception of how public spaces are to be used; local intolerance of disruptions associated with events such as interrupted transit service and facility availability to accommodate major events.
- The opportunities that would come of a Major Events Strategic Partnership would be venue development; growth in tourism and national recognition; diverse cultural events; partnership growth and devoted resources to events that would contribute greatly to HRM's culture; the expansion and creation of new events; introduction of an Event Incubator Program, a bidding process that would incorporate a two-year pre-bid identification, evaluation of framework and funding support along with risk identification and management.
- In March 2008, ACOA contributed \$1.5 million in funding to Events Halifax for Major Events conditional upon matching investment from other levels of government. The Province is expected to announce its involvement in the very near future. TCL, a Provincial/Crown Corporation, has operated Events Halifax since 2008 and would act as the Service Provider under TCL Major Events based upon their vast experience in attracting and executing major events.

During the ensuing discussion on the proposed Major Events Strategy, staff responded to comments/concerns of the Committee members as follows:

- Urban and suburban areas would not be competing against one another; it would not be beneficial to have a stadium in one area competing for events from other areas.

Mr. Doug MacDonald entered the meeting at 2:01 p.m.; quorum was achieved at this time.

- There would be exclusive funds for HRM.
- In regard to financing options, the only option that would be recommended would be the creation of a reserve fund under the Halifax Metro Centre's budget rather than a Special Events Reserve; HRM Operating Budget or a Property Tax Subsidy.
- The only "new" position created would be that of a Human Resourcing Director or

- TCL Major Events Manager.
- The Events Halifax brand would be replaced with TCL Major Events.

In response to what would differentiate major events with not so major events, Mr. Grant MacDonald explained that existing annual events could become major events as some may have national/international appeal. Other events are quality local, regional events that would be comfortable remaining where they were. The Major Events Strategy would not encroach on anything at a local community level. Decisions on major event status would be referred back to the Special Events Advisory Committee to determine what would constitute a major event. Consideration would have to be given to whether or not the event has or would attract significant inbound tourists or media interest for branding opportunities.

- Approximately 65 - 75% of major international events would be directed toward HRM.
- Events that would be pursued under the new strategy would include international conferences/congresses that would attract high yield business. A review of the available inventory of facilities would also dictate what events could be pursued and which events could be accommodated on a temporary build basis.
- Other events that could be pursued would be annual events involving entertainment/sporting activities such as the Juno/Gemini award shows and cultural events such as the World Pipe Band Championships that draws 10,000+ participants/spectators.
- There would be no duplication of services between TCL Major Events and those offered by HRM as Events Halifax

Mr. Stuart Jolliffe expressed confusion with what was being proposed in regard to responsibility over the events and requested clarification on the role of the proposed organization: would they be executing the events or selling the events. In regard to the new model, would there be a duplication of what already exists within HRM.

Mr. Grant MacDonald explained that over the years Events Halifax and the Civic Events department of HRM have found their boundaries and have worked well together. The role of the TCL would be in business acquisition; execution expertise versus the services and infrastructure and logistics provided by HRM's departments. There would be no change in that model. The Major Event Hosting Strategy would be created by HRM staff, the Special Events Advisory Committee and Events Halifax.

Mr. Jolliffe noted that HRM was in a different "event world" than other areas of the province

and the notion of creating one model for all services to all areas would have direction set in many ways. The struggle would be having to serve different masters; a provincial master and an HRM master. The only apparent strategic advantage at this point is the assurance of funding partners which would be disproportionately sided against the benefit to be gained. He also expressed concern that the proposed model did not show the accountability level being equal to the output, and; resources would be spread to smaller areas of the province.

Mr. Grant MacDonald advised that the return on investment for HRM would be a disproportionately higher funding resource for HRM as HRM would receive the majority of activity. There would be a dedicated arm to service HRM exclusively. It would be disadvantageous to forgo the opportunity and lose the potential investment of the other two partners. There would be the potential for a middle ground in regard to the governance model through continued discussions with HRM and the other partners.

Mr. Scott Ferguson commented that the entire proposal was built on middle ground with Halifax as the Hub City Provider acting as the engine. The rural component would not take away from the Halifax component.

Councillor Johns noted that more clarity around the governance model was required. If HRM were to be a 1/3 funding partner, would HRM receive 1/3 of the vote. He questioned why this was being discussed when events were coming to Halifax regardless.

Mr. Andrew Whittemore noted that clarity was required in regard to the bid development and event execution aspects: would the bid development aspect be separate from the Metro Centre who would execute the event.

Councillor Johns proposed a cost centre through the Trade Centre Limited that would be conditional on there being a surplus rather than changing the current structure.

In response to Mr. Jim Donovan, Manager, Economic Development, Mr. Grant MacDonald responded that the proposed model closely resembles that of Melbourne and Sydney, Australia where the primary stakeholders receive 95% of the activity.

In response to Mr. Doug MacDonald, Mr. Grant MacDonald advised that the five year plan would be evaluated through the quarterly and annual reports.

In response to Ms. Sally Camus, Mr. MacDonald and Mr. Scott Ferguson advised that this would be an opportunity to aggressively pursue future investments toward new

infrastructure such as a new convention centre through engagement of potential partners on new infrastructure development.

Councillor Sloane noted that if the proposal were to go forward consideration should be given to possibly aligning with Greater Halifax Partnership to bring in more business development networking opportunities such as trade shows.

Mr. Grant MacDonald advised that there were more active projects for Cape Breton than Halifax at the moment and that there were pockets of engagement from areas such as Yarmouth, Truro, Port Hawkesbury and Industrial Cape Breton.

Mr. Brian Rose commented that it was time to step forward and remove the ego and work together as events will come to Halifax and the other activities throughout the province may bring more opportunities here. There would also be more resources to draw from and perhaps a more streamlined approach that would create more efficiencies.

Mr. Whittemore noted that the decisions, in regard to funding by HRM, would still be made by Regional Council.

The meeting recessed at 3:40 p.m.

The meeting reconvened at 3:48 p.m.

Mr. Andrew Cox inquired how the proposed model would assist with improving time lines for bidding on events. He noted the two - three week turnaround period that HRM had to put forward a \$1 million bid for the World Junior Hockey event in 2008. Mr. MacDonald noted that requesting funds prior to the bid process would be part of the strategy: 100% proactive to be able to react to last minute opportunities. There would be reports prepared for review by the Committee including the research/feasibility stages.

Mr. Mike Gillett inquired if moving from the Metro Centre building would give the perception of a more arm's length, stand alone piece to ensure complete autonomy. Mr. MacDonald acknowledged that the issue had been discussed and they were aware of the perception and that there would be advantages to being autonomous in a separate location. Mr. Ferguson added that he did not see the need to physically leave the Metro Centre building as it was owned by the municipality yet the group would also work with the Province.

Councillor Sloane left the meeting at 4:03 p.m. Quorum was lost at this time.



Mr. Whittemore acknowledged support for the need for new governance and alignment of strategies yet he questioned why HRM should have to pay when the province receives \$40,000,000 in HST for the events. He noted that HRM's role has traditionally been to offset municipal costs but this proposal would require HRM to pay 1/3 when HRM taxpayers are already contributing a lot. Halifax would actually be paying closer to 50% for this model. In response, Mr. MacDonald encouraged HRM to speak with the province in regard to this matter as he did not have the financial information to respond.

Mr. Donovan noted that ACOA is very rural centric with their fund and along with the provincial commitment for economic rural development, would there be strings attached to that funding. He noted that HRM would put in \$1.4 million and then the province would want to take the control. Mr. Ferguson noted that HRM was receiving \$900,000 per year from the Federal Government in profits from the Metro Centre which was built by the Federal Government and turned over to the city.

Mr. Rose inquired what would be the return on investment to HRM; would there be more events that would fill the hotels and what is the capacity of the city to handle more events.

Mr. Donovan requested clarity on how the funds would be raised to build the facilities, do expansion and improve.

In response to Councillor Johns and Mr. Jolliffe, Mr. Whittemore advised that he would provide a staff report for the May 13<sup>th</sup> meeting outlining the governance option models for the new strategy and provide comment on delivery mechanisms as well as options for service delivery.

## **5. ADDED ITEMS**

### **5.1 Hallmark Events**

#### **5.1.1 Halifax Pride**

Due to a loss of quorum at 4:03 p.m. this item was deferred to the May 13, 2009 meeting.

#### **5.1.2 International Air Show**

Due to a loss of quorum at 4:03 p.m., this item was deferred to the May 13, 2009 meeting.

### **5.2 Commons Concert Sites**

Due to a loss of quorum at 4:03 p.m., this item was not discussed.

**5.3 Membership - Greater Halifax Partnership Representation**

Councillor Johns will contact the Greater Halifax Partnership in regard to a Representative to serve on the Committee.

**6. NOTICES OF MOTION - NONE**

**7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, May 13, 2009, Media Room, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor City Hall, 12:30 - 3:30 p.m.

**8. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:22 p.m.

Chris Newson  
Legislative Assistant